President:
Tom Titmus
299-2030

Lafayette Historical Society
POST OFFICE BOX 133, LAFAYETTE, CA 94549

NEWS

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A Lafayette "Founding Father" to Speak at Annual Meeting

Bob Fisher, one of the early proponents for incorporation of Lafayette as a city, will be our speaker at this year's Pot Luck dinner and annual meeting. People who were here for that 1968 incorporation event will remember Bob as a charter member of the city council and an early mayor. He was later president of JFK University, later moving on to preside at the San Francisco Foundation. Recognized as an excellent speaker, Bob will discuss "ancient" politics in Lafayette and ???? Well, you'll just have to attend to learn the rest.

Bill Somerton Remembered

Bill Somerton, former president and a long time activist in the Lafayette Historical Society, died on February 23, 2001. His wife, Joanne, had died in January of this year. A celebration of his life was held March 3rd at Lafayette Christian Church.

LHS member and director Ruth Dyer remarked, "When I think of Bill Somerton, I think of his energy, talents, and particularly his dedication -- dedication to his family, his church, his profession, and to the community at large. He was international in his thinking, yet he was very effective in guiding the Lafayette Historical Society in many ways. His search for a suitable history room was never-ending. He designed and produced a series of displays which informed the general public about aspects of our local history. He and his wife Irma (who died in 1995) labored over our archives, trying to make them accessible yet secure. Bill Somerton was forward-thinking, and his many attributes will have contributed much to the future of our city and its history."

Bill's grandson, Rob Somerton, remembers him as a "loving father and grandfather."

This writer found Bill always supportive and interested, willing to take time to discuss any issue about LHS. He always seemed to be thinking of ways LHS could be improved and made more effective.

The Board of Directors plans to include a fitting memorial to Bill in the upcoming LHS space in the new Lafayette Library. Those wishing to support this effort may contribute to the History Room fund already established at the Lafayette Community Foundation, with the contribution earmarked for Bill's memorial. Please contact Marechal Duncan, 283-6812.

In addition, the Somerton family has established a scholarship fund in memory of Bill and Irma Somerton, benefiting minority students in engineering or library science. Donations can be made to Somerton Scholarship Fund, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, 1212 Preservation Park Way, Oakland, CA 94612.

—by Gary Willcuts

"We believe in the power of history to ignite the imagination, stimulate thought and provide enjoyment. Through our collections and programs we strive to link Lafayette's history to the lives of people."

President's Message

"We has found the enemy and they is us!"

This repeat of an exclamation by a cartoon character (Pogo as I recall) may not be grammatically correct but does get attention and is logically correct. We have commented on the aging of the LHS membership and now it is time to encourage younger generations to join so they can stir up the pot.

Someone needs to be around to tell their kids about how the traffic problems on Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Moraga Road were cleaned up and controlled. (It will be done won't it?) How about chronicling the history of the revamping of the Central Lafayette exit from the freeway? Or even the intersections at Mt. Diablo Blvd./Moraga Road/Oak Hill, etc. Perhaps the Brown family Plaza (you know that's the Lafayette Plaza with General Lafayette's statue - Elam and Margaret Brown donated the plaza - Margaret had the cash) will be completed and re-dedicated this summer. A new library site will be selected and actually built with an area dedicated to local history. There are hopes for a room or at least a corner dedicated to LHS and you folks who have kept memories alive. A number of "us" may not be present at dedications planned for the future so "us" got to get some folks on board to steer the boat and woman (or man) the oars. Current members can beat the timing drums by each encouraging one person or family to join up. Let's check the score at the annual meeting. All comments and suggestions are solicited.

—by Tom Titmus

Elam Brown Plaza Dedication

Marechal Duncan reports the Lafayette City Council, at its March 26 meeting, decided that the Dedication for the newly renovated Elam Brown Plaza will be held in conjunction with the annual Lafayette Art and Wine Festival, September, 15th and 16th this year. The city earmarked $7,500 in the preliminary budget for the event.

The Historical Society will take part in the dedication and hopes that all the members will be in attendance.

—by Marechal Duncan

How the Pot Luck Dinner Works

Held at its traditional Veteran's Hall location, the 2001 Pot Luck will kick off with a no-host social hour at 6 pm on Tuesday, May 8th. Dinner, at 7 pm, consists of salads and casseroles brought by the participants. You choose which of those you'd like to bring. Whichever it is, it should serve 6-8 people. LHS will provide wine and coffee. Directors will bring the desert.

Directors Election

One-third of the seats on the Board of Directors are filled each year to a 3 year term by election at the annual meeting. The three current directors whose terms expire this year are Tom Titmus, Jop Van Overveen and Gary Willcuts. Tom and Jop have agreed to serve another term. Gary Willcuts withdrew as a candidate just before publication of this newsletter, not leaving enough time to include a replacement for his position in this issue. A replacement may be offered to the membership at the meeting.

In addition, at its March 2001 meeting, the Board elected Robert "Rob" Somerton to fill the position held by his late grandfather, Bill Somerton. Such appointments are subject to the vote of the membership at the next membership meeting.

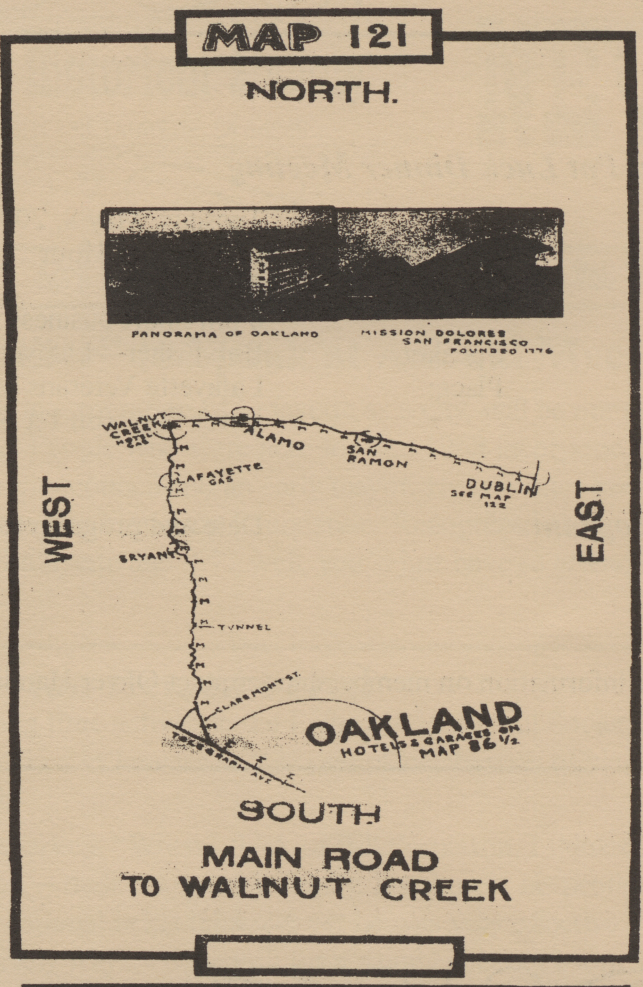
Thus, Rob Somerton, Tom Titmus and Jop Van Overveen will be standing for election at the May 8th meeting. A fourth candidate may be proposed as well, to replace Willcuts. Remember, nominations may be made from the floor, and they are encouraged. There's nothing wrong with nominating yourself! As Tom Titmus writes elsewhere in this issue, LHS needs new blood!

2000/2001 Directors

President: Tom Titmus 299-2030
Vice President:
Marechal Duncan 283-6812
Treasurer: Paul Sheehan .. 284-1287
Recording Secretary:
Ruth Dyer 283-8312
Corresponding Secretary:
Oliver Hamlin 283-6822
Keith Blakeney 284-2221
Janice Crosetti-Titmus 299-2030
Mary McCosker 284-5376
Rob Somerton 284-9785
Joseph Van Overveen 283-3650
Bill Wakeman 283-3908

2000/2001 Committee Chairs

Potluck Dinner:
Richard Johnson 283-0199
Archives:
Book Sales: Ruth Dyer 283-8312
Community Relations:
Marechal Duncan 283-6812
Displays:
Fire Engine:
George Wasson 284-4603
Historian: Bill Wakeman .. 283-3908
LHS Online:
Membership:
Oliver Hamlin 283-6822
Newsletter:
Mailing: James Sturman .. 932-7620
Oral History:
Plaza Park:
Programs:
Jop Van Overveen 284-3650
Publicity:
Walking Tours:
Mary McCosker 284-5376



1914 Hamilton's Illustrated Road Map, courtesy of Joan Merryman

Lafayette Historical Society Member Information

(Please photocopy form for additional names)

Name: _____ Spouse: _____
Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____
Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Membership Categories & Annual Dues: (please check one)

____ Life membership--$100.00 (one time fee) ____ Family membership--$10.00
____ Business membership--$50.00 ____ Student membership--$2.50

Please indicate areas of special interest:

___ Annual dinner ___ Archives ___ LHS Online ___ Displays ___ Fire Engine
___ Landmarks ___ News Clips ___ Oral History ___ Photo collection ___ Programs
___ Research ___ Telephoning ___ Walking Tours ___ Other _____

Mail Check for dues $_____ and voluntary Fire Engine Maintenance contribution $_____ to:
LHS, PO Box 133, Lafayette, CA 94549

Lafayette Historical Society CALENDAR

Annual Pot Luck Dinner Meeting

Date:	Tuesday, May 8, 2001
Time:	6 pm Social Hour 7 pm Dinner 8 pm Short business items, followed by...
Speaker:	Bob Fisher—Lafayette Politics
Place:	Lafayette Veterans Memorial Hall, Mt. Diablo Blvd. at 1st St., lower floor (on 1st St.)

Fall Program Date and program to be announced

For information on membership, contact Oliver Hamlin, 283-6822.

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